

Yenani Madikwa, creative strategist for Africa at Bolt

By  [Karabo Ledwaba](#)

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This week we get to know Yenani Madikwa, Bolt's creative strategist for Africa. The award winning creative has worked at companies such as VMLY&R, Brave Group and Gorilla.



Yenani Madikwa is a creative strategist at Bolt. Source: Supplied.

▣ ***What do you enjoy most about your industry?***

I have met the sharpest minds in tech. This industry attracts people who engage topics of interest very deeply, meaning I am always surrounded by human encyclopedias. On any given day, I could be learning about the historical migration patterns of people in Estonia or sinking my teeth into insights behind what makes the nightlife in Nairobi so vibrant. Tech is where you learn fast and grow faster.

▣ ***What is a typical workday for you?***

My workday always starts with opening up my Slack app to catch up with the brand team and industry updates. Then, I take some time reading articles, watching vlogs and immersing myself in content that could inspire my approach on a brief I'm currently working on.

Finally, I do what all writers dread doing, writing. Depending on the day, I'll have a virtual review with my manager in Warsaw to have a campaign greenlit and then brief our social team in Lagos, design team in Tallinn and local marketing teams all over Africa to bring it to life. Having many minds working together to make something happen is always challenging, but is very satisfying when you see it all come together.

▣ ***Describe your career so far?***

My career started off as a complete chance encounter when a woman who later became my lecturer congratulated me on my matric distinctions. She said I should give copywriting a try because my timeline at the time was a collection of (bad) jokes and angsty teen musings. Most importantly, it seemed like the perfect way to escape the parental pressure I faced to study law (eek!) or medicine (more eek!). That woman, Elane Vrey (nee Goosen), changed my life.

Directly after ad school, I was headhunted by Suhana Gordhan after she saw my student portfolio and so began my love affair with the advertising industry where I grew from copywriting intern to creative director in eight years. I've worked at global conglomerate agencies and small boutique shops, each with something career-defining to teach me. Some career highlights include writing South Africa's most-loved ad for a petrochem company and winning gold at an awards show I didn't even know I was entered into for a commercial bank.

My pivot to tech happened a year ago when I was hungry for a new challenge. I wanted a sharp learning curve in an environment where novel developments happened at lightning speed. In all the ways I hoped, the tech industry has definitely lived up to the hype. I am now the creative strategist for Africa at Bolt and everyday is a new adventure spent working with and learning from people in our offices all over Europe and Africa.

▣ ***What are you currently streaming/reading/listening to?***

I am currently spending all my free time streaming HBO's *Succession*, listening to Beyonce's *Renaissance* to hype myself up for her world tour and reading my birth chart to prepare for a personal milestone.

📺 *What's your favourite gif?*

[via GIPHY](#)

I am a claircognizant Sangoma so the Oprah "I told you so" shrug GIF is my whole life.

📺 *Who inspires you?*

My husband and our daughter have changed everything I thought I knew about what it means to be inspired by the world. They fill my life with so much purpose, laughter, security and adventure. The three of us are thick as thieves and we're always working on some or other project together. Last month, we set up a trampoline from scratch which was way tougher than expected but we got it done as a team.

📺 *What did you want to be when you were a child?*

I wanted to be a doctor. When I was growing up in Cala, we had the most compassionate family doctor; Dr Nkumanda. I was always struck by how he had this wonderful way of making me feel better even before he administered any treatment. I never made it to med school (I just never had the patience for all the rules of mathematics) but I guess I'm a brand doctor now haha.

📺 *Give three pieces of advice for young people waiting to enter this industry.*

1. Be flexible. Because you never work alone to bring an idea to life, whatever plans you have for a brand project will almost always change. If you aren't flexible, this industry will frustrate you.
2. Develop a sense of humour and never miss an opportunity to give someone a compliment. People gravitate towards people that make them laugh and make them feel good about themselves/their work. If you can do that, you'll go very far in life with people opening doors for you that you didn't even know existed.
3. Have the work ethic of a person who has something to prove. It always shows and is often rewarded.

ABOUT KARABO LEDWABA

Karabo Ledwaba is a Marketing and Media Editor at Bizcommunity and award-winning journalist. Before joining the publication she worked at Sowetan as a content producer and reporter. She was also responsible for the leadership page at SiMags, Sowetan's lifestyle magazine. Contact her at karabo@bizcommunity.com

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